

The Best of

PEP TALK



The Best of PEP Talk

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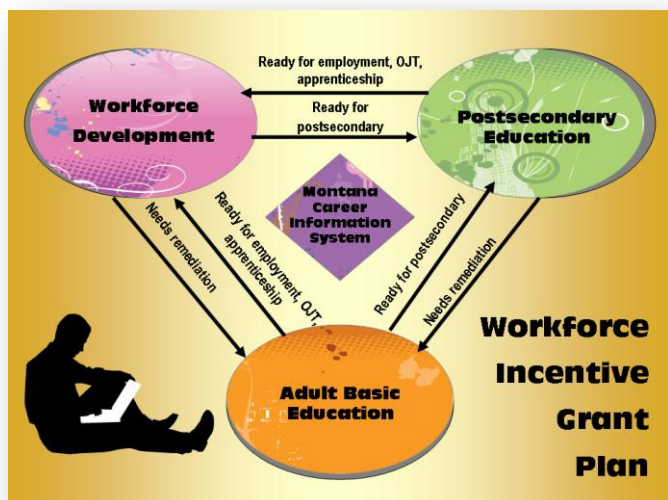
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A brief introduction to PEP Talk

While collaborative efforts are relatively uncommon in many parts of state governments, in Montana, three agencies worked together during the past two years to develop a product they hoped would streamline a difficult process for both community agencies and their under- and unemployed clients. Funded by a Workforce Incentive Award, representatives of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Public Instruction and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education created a statewide community workforce development project which enables unemployed and underemployed adults in Montana to gain essential job skills and encourages them to move up the career ladder based on their skills, interests and personal needs by creating a personalized employment plan. That program is called PEP Talk.



The team created the schematic (shown here) to show how the three agencies would work together using MCIS as the central tool to offer seamless services for job seekers. The group built the resulting PEP Talk program by focusing on the needs of their customers. The emphasis on the end user made the collaboration process easier because the end goal was always easy to identify.

The timing couldn't have been better. The recession was just starting to hit the nation full force. Montana was starting to feel the effects of the recession as well and agencies were finding an increasing number of job seekers looking for a decreasing number of jobs. Community agencies such

as the local Job Service, One-Stops, adult learning programs, community colleges and colleges of technology, and other client assessment and training agencies clearly had a difficult challenge ahead of them.

The team wanted to use the Incentive Award money in a way that offered a sustainable system for helping job seekers with long term goal planning.

They wanted to:

1. Create a program that would have life beyond the grant deadline;
2. Be practical and yet follow valid career development theory;
3. Use career development tools already available, in this case, the Montana Career Information System (MCIS);
4. Help clients develop a long-term mindset towards employment;
5. Streamline the process of developing job skills and attaining employment for both clients and agencies assisting them;
6. Provide a plan for a variety of job seekers: unemployed, underemployed, TANF recipients, high school and college students, career changers, displaced workers, and anyone unhappy with their current job; and
7. Be simple enough to do without assistance and be available 24/7, yet be a possible component of programs with agency partners such as Job Service, One-Stop Centers, Adult Basic Education and two year colleges.

With these guiding principles, PEP Talk was designed. PEP Talk stands for Personalized Employment Planning system. PEP Talk helps personalize the process of creating an employment plan by using the PEP Talk Blueprint and the Montana Career Information System (MCIS) by providing clients with a step-by-step plan of:

- *Awareness* (of their skills, interests and life issues);
- *Exploration* (of possible careers based on awareness results, job availability and demand in Montana and around the country, salaries, physical or other limitations, training needed, and possible financial assistance); and
- *Goal Setting*.

The PEP Talk Blueprint was created to simplify the process described above and help job seekers go step-by-step through the process of creating their own personalized employment plan. 28 video training modules were created as additional help and were posted to the PEP Talk website at www.smartaboutcollege.org. Posters, brochures, intakes cards and flowcharts were also created to help market the program and for staff use.

PEP Talk materials were distributed throughout the state in the fall of 2009 along with training programs for PEP Talk partners, helping staff members understand the components of the program. In total over 250 people attended these training workshops. 20,000 PEP Talk customer packets were distributed throughout the state. Communities were asked to adapt PEP Talk to their locales and the needs of their clients seeking work and job skills, focusing on creating a long-term mindset of finding jobs that are satisfying and sustainable.

Following the training programs, the team offered assistance to partners throughout the state on ways to implement PEP Talk. A facilitator visited 15 Montana communities between March and May of 2010. In addition to the agency and group meetings, an abbreviated PEP Talk training was offered to each community for those needing a review and for staff members who had not previously received the training. Trainings were usually well attended; participants were enthusiastic; and meetings often resulted in discussion on more detailed aspects of PEP Talk as those who had used it shared insights and hints. Most communities and partner agencies were excited about having the program as another tool for their use and use by job seekers. Several communities have done a superb job developing "niche" programs with PEP Talk, putting together various types of PEP Talk and MCIS classes and finding portions of the programs that best fit their clientele.

One of the recommendations that came from the community visits was a request for marketing so the team decided to use radio public service announcements. The radio spots ran for a month starting at the end of May until the end of June. Direct mail was also used to send information to all Montana libraries due to the fact that community libraries are a popular location for job seekers due to their resources and computers with internet access.

Included with the PEP Talk materials the grant also provided agencies with access to free practice tests for the GED, ACT, SAT, CLEP and Toefel exams, IDEAS interest inventory and ABE mini grants for implementing PEP Talk.

Timeline for the Workforce Incentive Grant



Summary of Meeting Results

During the spring of 2010, meetings were held in 15 Montana communities to evaluate implementation of PEP Talk. Use of PEP Talk among community agencies and within the 15 Montana communities varied widely. Most agency staff members recognize that PEP Talk and MCIS are invaluable tools and are searching for ways to more fully use it with as many types of clients as possible. The following information has been compiled from the community meetings and feedback received from staff of various agencies since the implementation of PEP Talk.

Classes

During the community meetings classes were mentioned as one of the most common ways of delivering PEP Talk services. Some communities were working together to provide classes, such as one agency providing the classroom space and another providing an instructor etc. Classes ranged in size from 2 people up to 50 people. Most found smaller classes were preferable to the larger classes since they often had to work with people with low levels of computer skills. Some agencies are working to get volunteers or work study students to help facilitate some of the training.

Marketing

Agency staff indicated that they believe PEP Talk is a tool that could be used by a large group of Montanans. Some of the customer groups they suggested are:

- Home schooled and privately schooled students
- Pre-release, half-way house and youth/adult treatment or drug rehabilitation programs
- Agency or college management to incorporate PEP Talk into first year classes for students

- Displaced homemakers
- Students, parents, guidance counselors
- Business owners
- Business development corporations
- Collaborate more with agencies working on transitions (Easter Seals, mental health, etc)

Brochures were provided and are still available for use for local marketing and networking of PEP Talk. Radio PSA's and direct mailings to libraries were conducted in May and June to help educate the public. The team will continue to look for no cost ways to keep PEP Talk visible to the public.

The PEP Talk logo is available to anyone who wants to link to the



Advising

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Types of advising which are available to BCP students via the UM-COT and local providers:

- **Career Advising**
 - Visit **UM-COT Career Services** for assistance choosing a UM-COT program and a career path or for after-graduation help with job placement
 - BCP students may schedule telephone conferences with UM-COT career counselors through the BCP Business Office; call 375-0100 for more information
 - The **Bitterroot Job Service Workforce Center** offers a wide range of locally available career counseling and job placement services; call 363-1822 for more information
 - Attend a BCP **PEP Talk** to explore career options and develop a realistic plan for reaching your career goals
 - PEP stands for Personalized Employment Plan and is a program designed by adult education and labor specialists to help you find job security and satisfaction, whether you are just starting out or wanting to start over
 - The **PEP Talk** introduces students to the Montana Career Information System (MCIS), a powerful online tool for self-assessment, career exploration, educational planning, and job search preparation.
 - To access MCIS, visit the **Student Assistance Foundation MCIS webpage** and log-in to MCIS by setting up a **General Use** account

PEP Talk Sessions

- **Offered every Friday, 9 to 11 AM at the Bitterroot College Program**
- No appointment or registration necessary—just drop by
- For more information, call 375-0100 (BCP) or 363-2900 (Literacy Bitterroot)

PEP Talk website and materials from their own website.

PEP Talk is posted on the Bitterroot College Program under their advising services.

Newsletters such as the Montana Career Resource Network have included articles on PEP Talk several times.

It has been incorporated as a resource in economic articles such as the February 2010 article on *How to Outsmart the Recession*.

Office Procedures

During the community visits many of the suggestions shared with the facilitator centered around office procedures and processes. Some recommendations were:

- Set aside areas in offices dedicated to PEP Talk and MCIS for individuals and classes.
- Help staff change how they view PEP Talk to see it as an opportunity and offer to more clients.
- Formalize procedures to ask all clients if they are using PEP Talk or MCIS during orientation.
- Set aside specific staff time for PEP Talk and MCIS training.
- Provide staff training and discussion on changes in attitudes about PEP Talk and long-term planning.
- Have a community certification program for job seekers who have gone through career planning with PEP Talk and provide vouchers for additional training.

Several agencies have taken the opportunity to use the training videos for staff in their regular staff meetings. The agencies that have done so have a much better understanding of how PEP Talk can meet their customers' needs and therefore find themselves using it more than agencies that have not invested the staff time in training. Like everything else in the public sector, many agencies feel overworked and understaffed just as the demand for their services have increased, however, once staff get comfortable with PEP Talk and MCIS they have found that it has saved them time and provided better service for their customers.

2 MONTANA
Economy
at a Glance



How to Outsmart a Recession (or Why It's Never Too Late for Career Planning)

by Annette Miller

The early signs of economic recovery are promising. In February 2010, the number of unemployed persons in the U.S. decreased to 14.3 million. The unemployment rate in January had fallen by 0.3 percentage points to 9.7%, where it remains in February. But even while it appears that jobs are beginning to come back, 14.3 million unemployed is still a staggering figure. Chances are that you personally know someone who has lost a job to the recent recession. Behind every statistic, an individual, a family, and a community are affected in some way.

For me, the recession hit very close to home. Both my brother and his wife became counted among the unemployed in the last two years. Rick had worked in the recreational vehicle industry as a sales representative for most of his adult life. He also lives in Elkhart, Indiana, a town now famous for having the highest unemployment in the nation at 15.3%, largely due to the rapid decline of the RV industry. This was not the first time Elkhart's RV industry had been affected by recession, nor was it the first time Rick had experienced unemployment due to a recession. But as tough as it is to find a job in the current economic climate, particularly in Elkhart, Rick found a way to beat the odds. He used his previous period of unemployment in a way that helped him to be more resilient during the recent recession. In fact, he

lowest in the nation. Job Service offices have reported weeks in which 6,000 workers applied for less than 100 job openings. Even those that have retained their employment have been impacted; the average U.S. weekly earnings fell by 1.6% in 2009.

Beyond the sheer numbers, the emotional toll on households has been equally significant. According to a New York Times/CBS poll of unemployed Americans, 48% have experienced emotional or mental health issues like anxiety or depression, and 55% have had trouble sleeping.

Taking control with career planning

It may sound like wall-to-wall gloom and doom, but the

PEP Talk Update

In our last newsletter we announced a new program called PEP Talk that was created through a joint effort between the Department of Labor and Industry, Adult Basic Education of the Office of Public Instruction and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. We are happy to announce that PEP Talk was successfully launched in November and all of the materials are now available for download at www.smartaboutcollege.org.

On this website you'll find the following:

- PEP Talk Blueprint (workbook)
- Skills Cards, Skills Worksheets
- Life Inventory
- Goal Setting Templates
- e-learning training modules

For staff specific training modules go to www.smartaboutcollege.org/peptalk which has training modules on portfolios and administration tools.

Using the PEP Talk Blueprint and MCIS you can easily have your students or customers complete a personalized employment plan complete with any

training or education necessary to achieve their personal employment goals. PEP Talk simplifies the career development process into 3 simple steps and is a great tool for teaching a class or unit on career development. For more information or questions on PEP Talk contact Shaunda Hildebrand at 1-800-541-3904.

Career Heroes Teacher's Guide

When we released the Career Heroes Workbook in 2008, the response from teachers was tremendous, but everyone seemed to have the same question: Where can we get the Career Heroes Trading Cards that are shown in the book? At the time, we hadn't considered making actual cards, but the idea seemed to be on everyone's mind, so we created 20 new Career Heroes characters, designed trading cards for these (as well as the 12 original characters), and came up with some fun classroom activities in which students can collect, trade, and learn facts about each occupation from the cards.

The Teacher's Guide provides an answer key for the exercises in the original Career Heroes workbook, but the real fun lies in the trading card activities. The activities were designed for a classroom size of 24 to 28 students, but can be adapted to fit the needs of any size classroom. To make the activities as fun and engaging as possible, they were designed as learning games that award students by giving them access to additional cards, which they can choose to keep or trade in for different cards. When the activities are finished, the kids can keep the cards they've collected.

While the original Career Heroes characters were based on the 6 Holland work interest categories (realistic, investigative, creative, social, enterprising, and conventional), the new characters were chosen to conform to the 16 career clusters defined by the U.S. Department of Education. The new occupations include Librarian, Chef, Home Health Aide, Industrial Machinery Mechanic, Computer Programmer, Judge, Cosmetologist, Registered Nurse, Police Officer, Mining Machine Operator, Civil Engineer, and more.

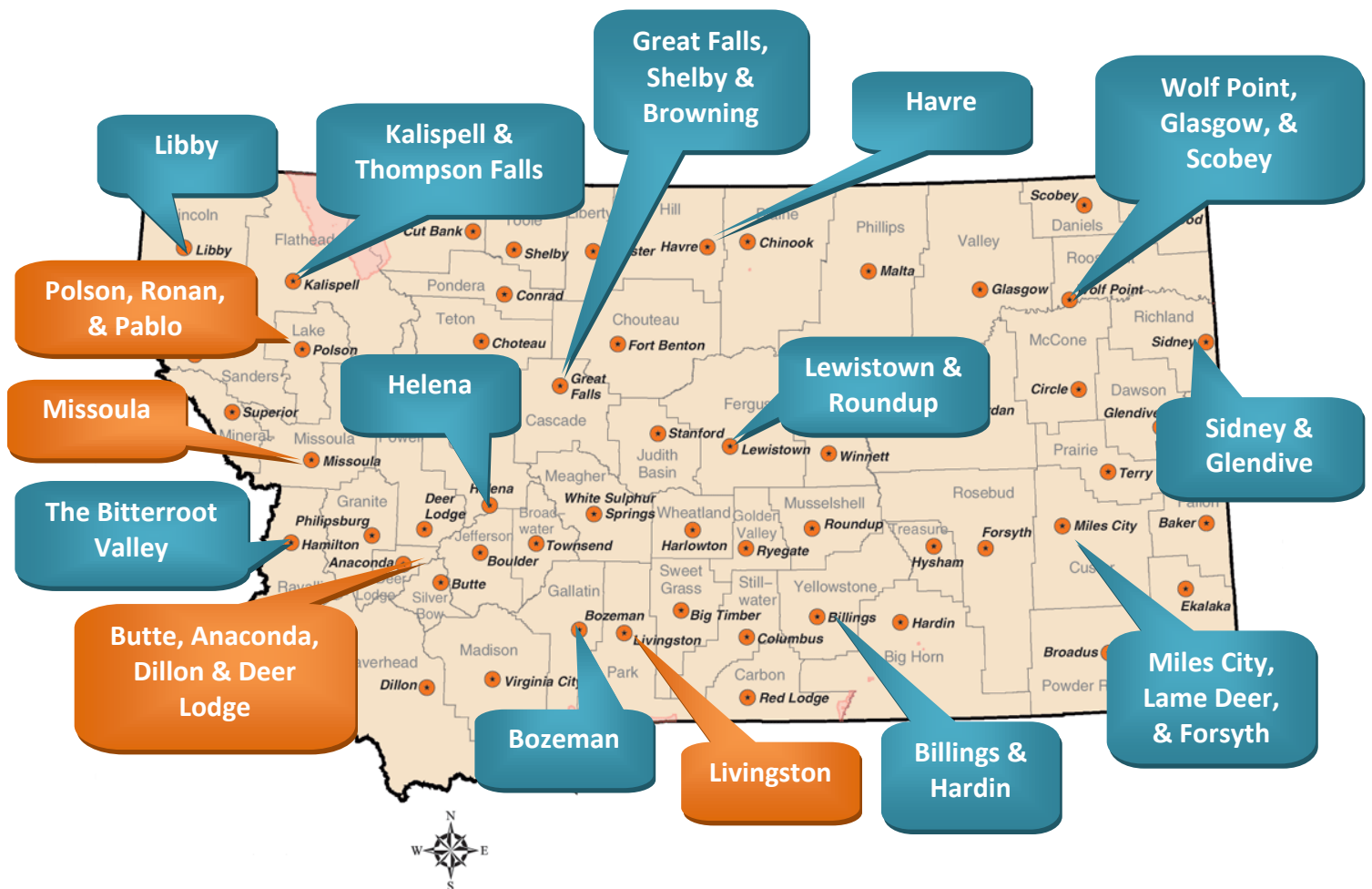
One teacher has said, "I have had several kids in my office looking over the career flash cards. They are asking where the dentist, doctor, astronaut, pilot, environmental engineer, teacher, farmer, vet, fisherman, banker, and service personnel ones are." While we regret having to leave out some of kids' favorite jobs, we are thrilled that the cards are getting kids to think about the different types of careers, and introducing them to some new ones. One activity even asks students to list occupations that were not included in the cards, as they collaborate to create a virtual city in which all their Career Heroes will live and work.

(continued on next page)

PEP Talk Best Practices 2010

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Community Meeting Results and Best Practices by Location



The orange boxes indicate that only the meeting summary follows and the blue boxes indicate a meeting summary and community best practice was shared and is included in the report.

Bozeman

Meeting Summary

In spite of the difficult economic climate, Bozeman area partners seem positive about the potential of working together more closely to expand use of PEP Talk, increase computer classes and resolve the issues of sharing portfolios of common clients. During the meeting agency staff agreed on working together to expand computer classes, discussed the need for increased focus on use of PEP Talk and identified common passwords all agencies could use. The participants had excellent ideas for marketing the program and stressed the need for PEP Talk to start in the schools.



Current use of PEP Talk

ABLE staffs' goal is to have every student go through PEP Talk and create their employment plan.

- They have seen increased community partner collaboration in identifying and assisting students to participate in PEP Talk.
- They have increased the number of technology stations to accommodate PEP Talk presentations and to support those interacting with the PEP Talk process.
- They developed their own PowerPoint presentation to use with by any staff member who has been trained in PEP Talk.
- PEP Talk is an "itemized" listing in Bozeman's ABLE program offerings.

Job Service has a staff member dedicated to developing the PEP Talk program integration and is adding resume writing as part of the process.

- Occupation exploration with occupation clusters is extremely useful especially where it shows how much education is needed and what wages are.
- Compare tab at top helps compare what already have done and what might want to do related to skills.

Career Transitions uses PEP Talk in weekly career counseling sessions.

- They use skills section to get clients started and work through MCIS to create profile.
- They encourage students to use MCIS as springboard, look for informational interviews and talk to someone in their dream job.

HRDC uses MCIS and PEP Talk for youth as it helps start kids thinking about future.

Butte, Dillon, Anaconda, Deer Lodge

Meeting Summary

PEP Talk is being used successfully in several agencies and others are resolute in making it part of their work process. Partner agency staffs in this area were eager to learn more about how to use PEP Talk in their communities and willing to work together to develop more accessibility for their clients to the program, including starting some classes and expanding others, finding adequate computer terminals and using volunteer trainers.

Current use of PEP Talk

Anaconda ABLE received a mini grant and used the grant to obtain computers for students to use. They used a volunteer to help the lead instructor.

Career Futures uses goals, barriers and skills sections as well as Reality Check.

- Use in classes - week 1 do soft skills and week 2 focus on hard skills.
- Get referrals from food stamps, pre-release center and VR.
- Very positive feedback from those who have used it.

Anaconda Job Service goal for this year is to create a specific area for its use.

- Have had staff training and hope to model a program with classes after what Missoula is doing.

Butte Job Service has computers others can use and plan on starting weekly workshops.

Dillon Job Service is using PEP Talk.

Literacy programs do not use the program yet, but are hoping to get COT student to help, perhaps open library early for using PEP Talk and MCIS and get referrals from Job Service. Plans include:

- COT build PEP Talk into the orientation week for at risk students.
- Learned needed to break up the program but students are very positive about it.
- Considering tying the program into larger preliminary course so more students will take it, especially first semester; can train other faculty to use it.

Great Falls, Browning and Shelby

Meeting Summary

Pep Talk is used for individuals and in weekly classes in Great Falls in some agencies and sparingly in other communities. The group was interested in finding other ways to use PEP Talk, such as with home school and private school graduates, on the Browning campus and with more youth, and understood the importance of increased communication among agencies tracking clients.



Current use of PEP Talk

Job Service provides bi-weekly classes on PEP Talk and MCIS.

- Full day workshop for TANF participants, averages 10 clients per workshop.
- There have been about 243 clients through the WoRC program so far this year

that have also attended MT CIS. Most have commented that they enjoyed the class and find it very helpful.

- They get many referrals from unemployment agency for job training, those likely to run out of unemployment insurance before finding a job.
- Looking at incorporating the PEP talk into their Worker Profiling process but have not really gotten that incorporated yet. Worker Profiling is a service they provide to people filing for unemployment. Depending on their situation they may or may not be identified to go into the pool of claimants depending on the probability that they will exhaust their benefits before finding employment or not. If the system red flags indicate that they may not find employment then they go into the pool. Each week names are drawn from the pool and these claimants are given an appointment to see a case manager. We brief them on the services and workshops we offer. PEP Talk and MTCIS would be very helpful with this group of people.

Higher Ed in Browning has used it sparingly so far but has asked to have a class this fall on PEP Talk and use as a retention tool.

All students at the **alternative school** in Great Falls go through this program, but mostly focus on MCIS

Great for **juvenile detention** - they find it fun, hands on and a good starting point.

VR attended training and has taken time to train staff at meetings, slowly working through chunks of PEP Talk so everyone has the same store of information.

- Very involved in transitions with other agencies such as mental health, Easter Seals, etc and PEP Talk is a key tool.
- Local mental health counselors also use MCIS.
- VR counselors use PEP Talk, mostly the occupation sorts to look at which ones can be done with various disabilities.

Havre

Meeting Summary

Havre area partner agencies use various tools for unemployed and underemployed clients but try to keep PEP Talk out front in their processes. Agency staffs feel they work together well as a community. Many clients think mostly about getting a job quickly to pay bills and they find it difficult to ask them to focus on the long term. **Higher education agencies** plan to push to use of PEP Talk more with undecided students and all agreed that encouraging high schools to use the program would enhance the job opportunities for all as well as reducing the workload of agencies. While recognizing that success of the program is difficult to measure, staff members working with PEP Talk are positive about the program, feeling that even if someone who takes home

a packet may not follow up immediately, he or she may in the future. The packet may also be left around for a spouse, friend, son or daughter to find and use. PEP Talk recently was a hit in June at the **Info Fair** at the Rocky Boy Reservation where over 15 packets were given out and it was very well received by participants. Area partners were also able to meet with staff of the Office of Public Assistance regarding the program.

Current use of PEP Talk

Job Service and **HRDC** currently use many different tools but keep PEP Talk out front.

- Try to get as many clients as possible registered.
- Will use for youth for summer employment.
- They have been taking the PEP Talk folders with them when they do “info things” for the colleges, etc., as well as taking them with on any outreach they do. Carol Lamey reports that “People seem happy to get the information, but quite honestly we don’t hear back from them. My theory is that it is still good—even if we aren’t doing the work with them—it is good if they have the information. Maybe they use it right away, maybe it sits in a pile and 6 months from now they look at it, or maybe they give it to someone else.”



Helena

Meeting Summary

Helena partner agencies use PEP Talk as one of their tools but all agreed they would like to focus on this program for more clients and create the PEP Talk mindset of long term planning. Used most often with dislocated workers and those wanting to change fields. All agreed enthusiastically that this program should start in the schools.

Current use of PEP Talk

Career Training Institute (CTI) uses PEP Talk mostly for clients who want to change fields.

- Staff went through all PEP Talk lessons so now gives clients the overview and starts the main training with the skills if knows the client would not take the time to do on own.
- PEP Talk is a direction finder.



Following the training (fall 2009), the **Helena College of Technology** and the **Student Assistance Foundation’s** Outreach Manager, implemented a plan to meet with the displaced workers attending UM Helena. They met with these students as a group and individually using the MCIS portfolio as a gateway to PEP Talk. The Skills test both on MCIS and using the cards were valuable. SAF did an overview of the many occupations in MCIS, how they can be researched and applicable job opportunities. Together Alan and Marti discussed the options for both resume building and advice about job searches available in MCIS. In addition, Alan introduced PEP Talk and MCIS in individual career planning sessions to UM-Helena students and during new student orientations throughout 2009 and 2010.

Project for Alternative Learning (PAL) uses MCIS.

Livingston

Meeting Summary

While Livingston partners are using PEP Talk for some clients such as TANF, both individually and in small groups, agencies agreed that more clients could benefit from the program as the feedback is always very positive. With a newly funded grant, Livingston agencies will be able to train tutors for assisting clients with PEP Talk, some marketing and ideally more collaboration among local agencies.

Current use of PEP Talk

Community Health Partners uses PEP Talk for TANF recipients, especially the interest inventory and skill cards, parenting classes to teach skills and goals.

- Staff have taught parents to use the program.
- Goal sheet is excellent and good to use but still needs to be facilitated.
- Life Inventory works well as can do on their own.
- Uses MCIS frequently.

Job Service uses with clients who are floundering and don't know what want to do or want retraining and have it available.

- Ideally clients would go to Health Partners with a Blueprint, then come to Job Service.
- Clients who have used PEP Talk are very positive about it.

Miles City, Forsyth and Lame Deer

Meeting Summary

The feedback on use of PEP Talk in this area has always been very positive, but all agencies felt they could and should offer the program to more clients. There is considerable interest in using PEP Talk with first year nursing students to help them evaluate their career choice.



Current use of PEP Talk

Miles City ABLE received a mini grant to implement PEP Talk. They were able to familiarize all their staff with PEP Talk.

The results:

- They report that: "By the time our students arrived for their first training session, we were able to "sell" PEP Talk to them enthusiastically and knowledgeably. Our extensive preparation truly paid off, as the students left their training sessions with a clear and direct pathway through the maze of information included in MCIS."
- Of the students who completed PEP Talk training, 38% were already employed, 25% of the unemployed students got a job or interviewed for a job during the month following the training. 38%

were already enrolled in postsecondary education but with unclear paths. Of those, 80% declared a specific career path the month following PEP Talk training.

- 31% of their students who had never before attended college enrolled in postsecondary education or training for the summer or fall semester following PEP Talk training.
- They met their targeted goal for enrolling current students but were also able to train students who had previously participated in ABLE.
- They offered the two-session trainings 3 times. All participants who attended their first session completed their homework and returned for the second session.
- They provided a meal before they began the training (Dinner and a Career). They commented that “Eating together before we began training proved to be an ideal way to establish a comfortable atmosphere for our diverse students. This was an unexpected outcome that led to a high level of rapport between students, as well as between students and staff.”
- 100% of the students who attended the first session followed through with all the required work and completed the training.
- They purchased incentives through local businesses, thus establishing both advertising and networking infrastructure and awareness for the ABLE program.
- They consistently tracked student progress between sessions with phone calls to see how their homework was coming along.
- They were so impressed with the SMART goal planning system that they have adapted its template to their goal-setting and counseling portion of the ABLE intake process.
- An unexpected outcome of offering PEP Talk trainings was the rise in the level of awareness concerning the ABLE program within the local community. As a result of newspaper coverage and word-of-mouth, as well as announcements to the CMT, they saw an increase in inquiries regarding their services.
- If students finish the program they receive \$75 gas, hair or clothing certificate (during the mini grant period)

Missoula

Meeting Summary

The Missoula area partner agencies have been inundated with dislocated workers needing career and skills evaluation and retraining. Agencies will continue to provide classes and with the recent grant, plan on being able to address some of these issues, provide more adequate training and more fully integrate PEP Talk into their usual work processes.

Current use of PEP Talk

The **Missoula Job Service** developed a two hour PEP Talk class, started in February, offered weekly and have between one and six participants each time.

- Class is mostly an orientation to PEP Talk and MCIS and they set up a portfolio.
- Expect that clients will be self-directed and do activities at home
- Ask that participants come back and speak with counselors but few have followed up though surveys show they are pleased with the program.

ABLE is using PEP Talk with groups in a program called "Where Do We Go From Here" for displaced workers.

- PEP Talk and MCIS used for skills and interests evaluation, work locator, goals, resume building and interviews.
- Feedback shows that clients want more time with career sections Have requested grant to continue PEP Talk classes to building a transition to college class.
- What seems to have worked with these displaced workers is to get them engaged immediately and get involved in the class.
- PEP Talk is a reality check plus exploration and self-confidence.

Polson, Ronan, Pablo

Meeting Summary

Most in the group really want to find ways to use PEP Talk; they all recognize that it is an invaluable tool and have introduced it to a variety of clients including dislocated workers, chronically unemployed and students.

The agencies do feel more clients will be interested in pursuing job exploration and training as many will be losing unemployment benefits soon. All agreed that PEP Talk needs to be made more of a priority, more effectively sold to clients, that they all need to work together to speak the same language to clients and that the program should be introduced in the schools.

Current use of PEP Talk

Job Service has introduced PEP talk to clients they see most often.

- Unemployment benefits and the extensions will end soon for many of the unemployed so this is a good time to start working with clients on long-term planning.

Wolf Point, Glasgow, Poplar

Meeting Summary

Main uses of PEP Talk in this area are for younger clients and those motivated to make changes. All at the meeting stressed programs such as these need to start in middle and high school and be offered in those businesses that might be laying off employees. They also agreed that in spite of the barriers, PEP Talk could be used more often and more effectively in their area.

Current use of PEP Talk



PEP Talk is used by the **WoRC program** participants and by job seekers specifically identified by the **Job Service** staff. They have found PEP Talk to be very successful with the younger generation – especially those just out of high school or college. Wolf Point Junior and Senior High School use MCIS. It is an easy transition from MCIS to PEP Talk in that they are already familiar with the program (MCIS) and have a general understanding of what to look for in their results. **Wolf Point Job Service** feels that PEP Talk is a great transition piece for high school students. They have also had some success with displaced homemakers who are starting over. PEP Talk allows the individual to focus on what career path is the best one for them.

They also see PEP Talk as a wonderful tool for the career counselor in smaller schools. It allows for individualization and offers opportunities for the school to follow up on. They gave the example of a career path chosen in health care, the counselor is given the opportunity (as is the case in the Wolf Point schools) to set up a job shadowing program for their senior year. They get actual on-the-job experience at a low level of the job. What a great way to 'try on a pair of shoes' to see if the job is a good fit for the student. With PEP Talk, as the portfolio is shared with the Job Service, it allows for a better placement for both the employee and the employer.

Poplar Job Service uses PEP Talk with some clients, mostly young, those open to new ideas.

Wolf Point schools use MCIS in the senior projects where each student needs to review a job and line up a job shadow.

Glasgow Job Service uses PEP Talk at the request of parole officers, mental health workers and schools.

- They try to use with people in WIA and those that need retraining.

Libby



Barb Rayome in Libby had the opportunity to facilitate the PEP Talk program for the Libby High School Career Day. Barb said it was a fun opportunity for her and she enjoyed working with youth and found them to be quite entertained and "into" the presentation. She presented an 18 minute portion of PEP Talk on "Reality Check". She showed the two minute video of Dave and his unrealistic expectations of the amount of money he would earn with his occupational choice. After the video each student had an opportunity to visit the MCIS website and take their own reality check. Barb relates that some of the students hadn't a clue what they wanted to do in life, especially in the freshman and sophomore class, and others were more focused and knew exactly the direction they wanted to take after graduation. Some of the students had their parents in attendance so they had an opportunity to see the choices their children had made. Many of the parents also found it very interesting. Barb presented to 8 groups averaging 25 students per session. She also overheard one of the teachers asking students what their favorite presentation was and several of them said the reality check and the resume writing.

Kalispell

Meeting Summary

Agency partners use PEP Talk in the Kalispell area, both individually and in classes, mostly for dislocated workers and for job skills and it has been well received by clients.

Current use of PEP Talk

HRDC uses PEP Talk in job skills classes.

- They have clients watch portions of the videos online and then move to MCIS.
- HRDC also uses with TANF clients who need to use the class for eligibility.

ABLE received a grant to help integrate PEP Talk into the current processes.

- Plans class with two session separated by homework program between.
- Addresses skills and goal setting using activities thought to be most helpful.
- Focused on students who almost have GED and want further training but do not know in what area.
- Plan to tape the classes so others can use it and will be standardized.
- Provides incentives for coming and finishing class.

The **Flathead Job Service** started PEP Talk classes on January 11, 2010. They surveyed participants of the classes afterwards. They felt small class sizes worked well with two instructors available to help clients with limited computer experience. This also allowed them to explain different segments of MCIS in more detail.



Survey results:

Question	Yes	No	Other
Did you find this class helpful?	14	0	0
Were all of your questions answered?	14	0	0
Are there any changes we could make to the presentation to make it more useful?	0	11	3 no answer
Do you require any additional services?		7	2 attend more classes 1 counseling 1 funding 3 no answer
Additional comments	Much more helpful than US Army ACAP career system		
	Thank you so much		
	Very informational		
	Very user friendly, great information, nice and helpful folks		
	Tim and Genia were great – thank you so much		
	Instructor did a very good job and I was very pleased		
	Great service – glad I came		

In addition the PEP Talk packet and MCIS program have also been used with approximately 65 worker profile clients. All have commented on the usefulness of the program, and many have mentioned taking it home to share with their families. The staff in the **Flathead Job Service** said the PEP Talk packet and MCIS program have been well received by their clients. It has proven to be very effective with their experienced workforce members interested in making a career change. With their younger clients, PEP Talk and MCIS have provided the opportunity to explore a variety of career options.

Flathead Valley Community College received a mini grant to implement PEP Talk and Distance Learning.

- They conduct monthly two-session lunchtime PEP Talk/Transition workshops.
- These sessions include hands-on activities related to core components of PEP Talk and MCIS.
- Target population is current **ABLE** students nearing completion of classroom academic goals, and/or currently seeking a non-self determined occupation.
- Sessions are offered free of charge and by invitation only, at ABLE staff member's discretion. The number of attendees is limited to 9 per month based on the number of available computers.

- Participants that attend both workshop session, complete the homework, and reflectively complete a workshop evaluation receive an optional participation incentive in the form of a haircut coupon, gas card certificate, or partial GED testing scholarship.
- A copy of the student's goal setting sheet is maintained in their file and follow up contact with participants is planned one month after completion of the workshop.

The Bitterroot Valley

Meeting Summary

High hopes for PEP Talk was the theme of the meeting in Hamilton. Agency staffs like the reality check and skills sections and how the program can be used for youth but prefer other assessments for some areas and would like those included in the portfolios. The area received a mini grant to help implement PEP Talk and plan to work together more in the future on joint programs such as orientation to PEP Talk. They understand the need to work together more as a community and to see PEP Talk as an opportunity that needs to be sold to more clients.

Current use of PEP Talk



Literacy Bitterroot has taken the lead in designing and presenting sessions to orient folks to PEP Talk and help them through the process. Amy Montieth has done a wonderful job of designing and facilitating the sessions. She is still working on an evaluation form to gather feedback. The participants in the PEP Talk sessions have been excited about the process and have gained insight into themselves as well as potential careers. Their sessions are held each Friday morning from 9-11 at the Bitterroot College Program in the back of the **Job Service** office. They invite students, job seekers, potential students and the general public. They have advertised to the community with flyers and newspaper briefs and have also invited students from the home school network. They feel that it is very important to continue PEP Talk in a collaborative fashion, and it is the most effective use of tax dollars to have a combine approach with one facilitator. They have written a grant proposal to a private foundation requesting funds to offer PEP Talk for one year as well as requesting funds from the Ravalli County Commissioners in case the private foundation does not fund their proposal. Dixie Stark offered up the following observation: "Last, but not least, I had a wonderful aha moment last week and realized that I was approaching this all wrong. I saw our students as being on a linear path with intake, assessment, placement in GED classes, completion of GED, attendance at PEP Talk, and then entry into college to prepare for the job market. Now we are inviting students to PEP Talk sessions as soon as we see them at orientation. I suspect that we will see greater retention and success with GED goals if they are tied to employment goals through the use of PEP Talk."

Patti Furniss from the **Bitterroot Job Service** says "We are thrilled with the coordination going on in the Bitterroot Workforce System. Dixie Stark, with Literacy Bitterroot, has taken a wonderful lead in coordinating the PEP Talk sessions and has even obtained private funding for this. Amazing!"

"The Bitterroot Workforce System's Business Plan is organized to have a Case Manager group that is working on learning each workforce partner's best practices for developing employment plans, conducting career change, and job developing. Case Managers have participated in the PEP Talk sessions to understand what it is about and can refer their clients, customers, or consumers appropriately. They are in the process of taking

the Copes, Cops, Caps Interest, Aptitude, and Work Values Assessment to understand what it is about and can refer appropriately. They will then have a discussion about the value of both for a person in career change.”

With the mini grant the Literacy Bitterroot was able to

- Replace outdated computers.
- Form a team of the Program director and two instructors to design local PEP Talk sessions. They created handouts and flyers for PEP Talk.
- Serve 30 people including six case managers from local workforce partner agencies.
- Advertise to the community with flyers and newspaper briefs, inviting students from the home-school network, students, job seekers from Job Service, potential students to the Bitterroot College program and the general public.

They feel it is very important to continue PEP Talk in a collaborative fashion, and it is the most effective use of tax dollars to have a combined approach with one facilitator. They applied for and received \$2,000 from the Annie Maclay Leffingwell Foundation. By using private funds they can also open up the sessions to individuals not enrolled in the ABLE program.

Lewistown

Meeting Summary

Lewistown agencies use PEP Talk in career counseling, for some job seekers, and in the GED training program. Staff stressed that the program needs to start in schools and many felt it works with a limited group of clients who are thinking in terms of long term careers, not just a quick job.

Current use of PEP Talk



Bob Feist, Central Montana Education Center, has started using PEP Talk at **NEXXUS** (treatment center) and reports that one of the guys there has been raving about it and how much he loved it, and has been an ambassador to the other family members (inmates) at the Center. He went through all the videos and got into MCIS. The MCIS staff has a PC only version of the program for any agency that works with people who cannot access the Internet such as prisons, pre-release, and treatment centers.

ABLE uses all parts of PEP Talk and MCIS but often skips around depending on the client.

- Staff have all been trained and have participated in a variety of in-service training days.
- Cards are difficult to use without sufficient space so they encourage clients to take them home.
- PEP Talk has become the goal setting class and offered to any student because it is an organized model for discussing goals and has been a definite plus.
- Now have a rule that can't sit for the GED unless have spent 60 hours reviewing and PEP Talk is part of those hours.
- Have 95% pass rate on GED.
- Goal setting class and attendance hours have increased.
- Students have a better grasp on realistic and achievable goals.

- They have talked about PEP Talk at trade shows, meetings, agencies, Youth Probation, Migrant Worker Program, and open houses.
- They have distributed posters to advertise as well as newspaper articles.
- Try to introduce PEP Talk to help encourage them to participate in longer term planning.

While they indicate that retention and follow through are their most challenging problems they are convinced that persistence is the key and they have very determined instructors in their program.

PEP Talk is used by the **Lewistown Job Service** but mostly by one employee.

- It is easier to introduce clients to the program if can sit down and talk them through key questions:
 - Are you willing to get more education or training?
 - Are you willing to relocate?
 - If you have been laid off, are you willing to look elsewhere?
- Use it for perspective to see if education and employment are pointing clients in the right direction.

HRDC uses PEP Talk mostly in career counseling and like the career and goal setting portions.

Worc uses in first month to do assessments, using for activities hours and use the full Blueprint booklet.

- If people need a GED, they are referred to ABLE which goes through PEP Talk.
- Often use the career section as well as the skill section cards.

Higher Ed is trying to use PEP Talk and MCIS with as many college students as possible and often refer them to ABLE.

Billings and Hardin

Meeting Summary

Several of the partner agencies in the Billings area are developing excellent model programs using PEP Talk and MCIS for youth, displaced homemakers and those wanting to make career changes. Plans are in place for expansion of the youth programs, group PEP Talk/MCIS classes and the addition of PEP Talk to programs for some first year students at MSU-Billings.

Current use of PEP Talk

Billings Adult Education has scheduled PEP Talk classes for every Friday.

- Students will schedule Workplace Skills with their counselor after completing the four PEP Talk classes to complete Career Research and Plans to attain their goals.
- All students may attend the WES (Workplace Essential Skills) classes they provide.



Displaced Homemaker program can use PEP Talk to build self-esteem as women often don't apply for jobs if feel don't have 100% of skills posted for job.

Very successful use of skills, Interests and Reality Check portions in **classes for youth**. It works well for this population to help kids learn what skills they have and that they have a chance in life;

- Used to enhance MCIS and to help with a job shadow program.
- Hope career exploration and job shadowing will turn into job contracts for placing youth in businesses.

Billings Job Service has created an area for developing the PEP Talk program and use by clients.

MSU-Billings plans to use PEP Talk more with incoming nursing students, undecided students in health-related fields and the college success class for at risk students.

YWCA will continue to develop partnerships with other agencies on use of these programs, continue month WIA meetings and seek rural employment opportunities and adult learning.

HRDC Youth program plans to do more with youth in the soft skills portions.

Hardin ABLE received a mini grant and purchased two computers and added more hours to an instructor's schedule to provide PEP Talk instruction.

- They had one person go through the entire PEP Talk program and 6 used portions of the PEP Talk program. They are happy with the results and are confident that PEP Talk will have a large impact on their clientele in the future.
- They set aside one hour per week for implementing PEP Talk.
- They advertised in the local newspaper.
- A presentation was made to the WORCing Partners organization.



Sidney and Glendive

Meeting Summary

Agency partners agree that they would focus on increased referrals and collaboration around clients. All felt strongly that marketing of PEP Talk to schools, parents and the community as well as including in mandatory classes at college would help enhance successful integration of the long term mindset of PEP Talk of future clients.

Current use of PEP Talk

Glendive and Sidney Job Service both use Reality Check frequently.

Jacklyn Damm, Sidney Job Service, created a presentation outline for PEP Talk geared towards job seekers and the WoRC program. She ended up using the outline for a 3-session training for their Youth Probation. They were able to use the Sidney High School's new library computer lab so the students were able to create their portfolios in MCIS while she was showing them how to do that while using the Smart Board. They were able to work on the Skills Worksheet and cards, create portfolios, create their resumes, and use Reality Check. She said that the youth really enjoyed the class and especially the Reality Check. The final class taught the youth about applications and interviews. Jacklyn said that it was really nice to have the PEP Talk folders and the outline on hand for the classes and she didn't need to prepare anything else for the class.




She also related her experience with a gentleman who was starting to develop his resume using WinWay Resume Maker. He wanted to be able to work on his resume away from the Job Service office so Jacklyn moved him into MCIS and showed him how to create a resume in MCIS which is available anywhere there is internet access. She said he loved it and even e-mailed her the next day to tell her how much he appreciates the program.

Higher Ed uses PEP Talk for interest and career exploration and would like to use it in the classroom.

Website Statistics

All of the PEP Talk materials including the training modules for staff and customers are available at www.smartaboutcollege.org. While 20,000 customer packets were provided to agencies, the general public also has free access to download materials off of the website. The materials are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The following numbers cover the period from November 2009 to September 2010.



Unique page views

8,892

Total Hours

673.4



Downloads

540

PEP Talk Team Suggestions and Helpful Hints

Staff training is the key to PEP Talk success. The agencies that have invested the time in watching the training modules have been having the best results. PEP Talk training modules were developed so that training is always available without expense or the need to travel. If you have suggestions for improving the modules contact Annette Miller at anmiller@mt.gov or 800-541-3904.

Community MCIS accounts can be created to simplify sharing customer portfolios. In order to create a community PEP Talk account each community needs to select one lead person to be the overall administrator. Once that is in place simply contact Donetta Clark at doclark@mt.gov to create the site.

Materials are still available so contact Annette Miller if you need more brochures, posters, Blueprints, Skills Cards etc. Materials can also be downloaded from the www.smartaboutcollege.org website.

Do evaluations after training sessions/classes and share the results with the PEP Talk team so we can brag about how great you are doing. We can also use that feedback to make improvements to the PEP Talk program.

And, continue to share what works best with us so that others can benefit.

The team hopes you find this Best Practices report beneficial. It is truly every one of you working with the citizens of Montana that make the difference.

We'd like to thank you for YOUR dedication and caring for the people you work with every day.